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## SERMONS

PREACHED BY

### HENRY WARD BEECHER.



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HENRY WARD BEECHER.

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## RELIGIOUS CONSTANCY.

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"Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord: his going forth is prepared as the morning; and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth. O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? for your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away."

—Hos. vi., 3. 4.

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This is a voice that comes to us from a strange land, far away in antiquity—a mournful voice of expostulation. But the thing which aroused the prophet's sad lament is as familiar to us as it was to those who lived in that day. "As face answereth to face in water, so the heart of man to man," in all the different nations and in all the different ages of the world. The same temptations follow the same passions, and substantially the same experiences are the result, somewhat colored, shaped a little differently, wearing a different costume, that is, but in their inner nature absolutely the same, in ancient days and in modern. We find the same expostulations and the same recognitions in the New Testament. The inconstancy of men in goodness; the facility with which they are excited; the quickness with which they recognize the better way; the rapidity with which they forget it—these are themes of the Old Testament and of the New alike, and also of observing men in profane literature.

"Many are called, but few are chosen."

Of all the seed sown, but one parcel—that which fell into good ground—came to good account; while that which fell

by the wayside, in the road, on the rock, and among thorns, perished.

The topic is the inconstancy, the remission, of religious emotion. If one considers the prodigious scope of the themes that are brought to bear upon the human soul under the general name of *religion*, it is surprising that man, once aroused, should ever know quiet again. The nature of God, and his divine government; the destiny of men; the everlasting future; right, with its benefits; wrong, with its penalties—these are adapted to excite all the feelings of the human soul, and to keep them in a state of vital interest; and yet, in point of fact, we perceive that men do not abide continuously and long under the impressions which are excited in them, or under the emotions which are developed in them, by the presentation of the great truths of religion. There is a vast amount of tremulous excitement, there is a great deal of feeling, which runs for an hour very deeply; and yet, the transiency of religious life and of religious feeling is just as much a matter of remark to-day as it was a thousand years ago—and just as much a matter of remark in the church as it was in the synagogue.

The grand obvious reason will be, of course, in the nature of the human soul; in its proclivity downward and backward towards the animal, on which it is based, and from which it sprang. The love of the world; the power of selfish instincts; the force of habits which, like springs pressed, or like trees blown by the wind, fly back again so soon as the impressing cause is removed—these are the more common and obvious topics of remark. Men have a very brief religious experience because the power of the world is so strong over them.

It is not, however, in that direction that I propose to speak this morning. There are, besides all these great causes which carry with them an implication of wickedness, other reasons which, although they may not be without blame, turn largely on the want of knowledge. There are hundreds and thousands of persons who do not want to be conformed to the world; who do not desire to have transient fluxes of feeling. They would rather not be like mountain brooks

which are full when it rains, and are empty as soon as the clouds have passed. They study, they pray, they inquire, asking, "How shall I continue in that state which is so blessed? How shall I prolong those experiences which I crave?" To such there is a line of instruction which, although it will carry more or less the sense of blameworthiness, will, after all, I think, throw light upon their understandings, rather than pressure upon their consciences, which, frequently, are already too sensitive.

There is a vast amount of error, I remark, first, in the doctrine of the *uses* of feeling, and therefore of its *degrees*, and of the possibility of equal emotion on the part of all. If religion were the putting of persons through a divine process from which each one emerged amply equipped, and equipped like every other, then every one might demand that his experience should be like that of every other one; but such is not the case. Men are brought into the religious state with all their conditions of constitution, or of soul and mind, with all their conditions of education or non-education, with all their misteachings and prejudices; and they begin at different points. Each one has problems of his own in life. Often, when men begin a Christian life, it is with the idea that to be a Christian means to have an overflowing fountain of joyful and consecrated religious emotion. Whatever may be their purpose, however much they may persist in right living, however profound may be their sense of the consecration of soul and body to the will of the Lord Jesus Christ, if there be an absence of tumultuous feeling, deep and joyful, they sit in judgment upon themselves; or if emotion comes to them but seldom, and slenderly at that, they pass upon themselves judgment according to the measure of feeling which they have seen in other people. So it comes to pass that a man of great heart and great emotion, living a godly and Christian life, while he does a great deal of good in the community, may unconsciously be the means of oppressing weaker natures, where they take from him their notion of what a man should feel; though God in his providence deals with each particular man according to the method which is adapted to him.

Now, feeling is not to be sought as a luxury, nor is it to be sought with a continuity which shall make it like the pleasant sound of the wind among the leaves in summer, or like the sound of music at a banquet. The object of feeling is to be an operative one. To be sure there is pleasure in it; but as we eat, not for the pleasure of eating, but for the more fundamental reason that by food we build up the wasting body, and eat as an absolute necessity, though there has been attached to eating the accompanying pleasure of sapid food; so feeling has a use, though it carries with it a pleasurable experience. The design of feeling is not to create pleasure alone. So that persons who enter a Christian life, and seek to promote such a life by the experience of feeling, exquisite, abundant, and continuous, may think that they are seeking religion, while often they are seeking self. A man may be actuated by a spirit of self-indulgence in demanding that he shall be pleased with moral sensations or moral experiences as much as in demanding that he shall be surrounded by physical objects of pleasure.

What, then, is to be the limit of feeling? How much feeling is a man to have? Enough to maintain himself vitally. Enough to impel him on every side to the duties which belong to his station and to his nature. If one has latent feeling, that is enough; that is to say, if latent feeling is really emotion taking on the form of action, it is as truly emotion as that which effervesces and overflows. The most powerful loves in life are latent. Although father and mother often disclose much feeling toward their children, yet, after all, ninety-nine parts in a hundred of the real love of father and mother is shown in deeds done—in watching, in care, in thinking, and in provision. Everywhere in life true and wholesome feeling tends to clothe itself in action. And although religious feeling, as such, rising up like some columnar sound in a band of music, merely for its own pleasurable existence, is not an undesirable thing, yet if you seek it with the impression that that is the distinctive feeling of religious life, it misleads, and oftentimes harms. I have known many persons who gave up a thousand ethical duties for the sake of having *experience*, as it is called. There are

not a few people who devote themselves to meditation, to exercises in the closet, and to meetings, with a desire to so attune their inward selves as to bring forth emotions, not for the sake of making their life more fruitful, and others happier, but in order to come nearer to what they believe to be the state of soul which God requires of them.

This is the old notion of those days when convents were founded, and caves were resorted to as retreats ; when men thought the way to go to heaven was to get out of life and away from men ; when there was the impression that a man's safety depended upon his being separated from physical and social circumstances ; when men were seeking after an ideal perfectness in the individual.

It is a notion which has come down to us in many lines. There are many people nowadays who are acting in accordance with it, and attempting to be eminent in their Christian life by having a full-orbed emotive experience all the time. And this is not bad when it is accompanied with fruit ; it is not bad when it is the water that turns the wheel of life ; but it is not only bad, it is eminently pernicious, as a substitute for practical living.

In this connection I should add that a great many persons are constituted so that depths and currents of feeling such as others have are quite impossible to them. It is possible for all persons to experience enough of emotion to constitute a motive toward right living ; but there are multitudes of persons who, by their nature and organization, are incompetent to produce very deep, certainly very prolonged, tides of emotion ; and if they are seeking them, they are like persons who seek for gold in a stratum that never bears gold.

Secondly, the law of the *production* of feeling must be better understood ; for there are many persons who seem to think that feeling so exists in men that one has but to wish for it, long for it, pray for it, try for it, to have it come. No person trying on any other side of the mind would ever come to such a conclusion. Suppose I were to say to you, "I want you every one to feel caution," would you feel it ? Try to feel it ; can you feel caution by trying ? Suppose I were to say to this congregation, "Now, all of you feel mirthful,"

would you feel mirthful ? Commanding you to be mirthful, or wishing you to be mirthful, does not produce mirth in you. But I do not need to command you, to cause you to feel caution. If I were to lift up my voice and cry, FIRE ! you would instantly feel caution, and the fear that goes with it. Or, if I were to present to your minds some idea that was witty or humorous, I should not need to command you to feel the sense of humor or wit : you would feel it as a matter of course. Feeling follows causation. He that wants any special phase of feeling must have the cause of that feeling.

What, then, are the causes which produce feeling ? They are various. There are certain ideas or elemental truths which produce the sense of awe ; there are others that produce the sense of faith ; there are others that produce love ; there are others that produce joy ; there are others that produce sorrow ; there are others that produce remorse ; and whoever wants a given feeling must understand what are the truths which stand connected with its production.

Many persons are born into the Christian life, they become members of the church, they attempt to live right, and they say to themselves, "It is my duty to venerate God ;" and they try to do it ; but can anybody have veneration for God as the result of mere wishing ? He that would venerate God must bring before his mind those clearly vital conceptions of God which shall lift before the soul the vastness and grandeur of his nature. When he does that he has no need of commanding the feeling. Then it comes of itself. In other words, there are many persons whose feelings fail them. They long to be better ; they feel right ; they seek to do well ; but their feelings are constantly deliquescent, because they do not understand the law of the production of feeling ; because they do not recognize the simple fact that feeling must have a cause in some truth which is presented to the soul. The exceptions to this are only in appearance ; examine any instance of the arousal of feeling, and you will not fail to find its normal, adequate cause.

Thirdly, we are to take into consideration the law of *continuity* of feeling in men and to look into the case of those

who are mourning because they have so little feeling, though they strive after it.

There be those who think it is their duty to have a continual sense of the divine presence—which is an absolute impossibility; who think it is their duty to abide in a continual sense of love—which is an absolute impossibility; who think they are to feel reverence, all the time—which is an absolute impossibility. For feeling, when it becomes continuous, is insanity. Take your best feeling and let it run on all day long, and all night in your waking hours, and the next morning,—and your father, if he knows what you are about, will send for the doctor. It is necessary that you should have medicine and regimen; for you are on the road to insanity. Emotions never run thus in channels. They are always changing. They rise and fall. They are like waves that run up, and then break and fall down, another running up behind or from one side, and breaking, and falling down, and another, and another. If one observes a wholesome mind, he will find that there are scores of feelings which alternate, first one being in the ascendancy and then another. The health of a man's mind is determined, not by the continuity of any one feeling, but by the succession of feelings which he has. The on-going of the impulses of a wholesome mind is like the progress of a tune. The theme runs high or low, through all manner of notes. It is not a monochord. There is not one continuous sound running through it. Neither has it one unvarying pitch.

Nothing is worse for a person than to attempt all the time to have just one state of mind because he thinks that to be a Christian is to have God in one's thoughts all the while. You cannot do it, and you ought not to try to do it. It is unnatural. If it seems anywhere to be commanded, the command is only metaphorical, or to be applied in a general sense.

I am always a patriot, but I do not think of my country in a way which inflames a distinct feeling of patriotism once where I think of other things a thousand times. I love all my children, and yet I pass ten hours without thinking of them where I pass one in thinking of them. I love art; and

yet sometimes a whole month will roll away in which I do not think of it. The sense of art is there, and the secret influences of it are on me ; but I seldom bring it up as a matter of distinct consciousness ; and when I do it alternates with many other things.

Even an artist must eat and drink ; he must visit and be visited ; he must be often broken in upon. There are many things besides art which are thought of even by the most enthusiastic artist. Woe be to that genius who is so allied to one thing that the moment he has turned aside from that he is all at sea ! It is the curse of those who are called *geniuses* that they move in a narrow channel, and are at home nowhere else, so that when they wander on either side they lack adaptation to a healthy, broad and true manly development.

And this is just as true in religion as anywhere else. A man who is trying all the time to keep himself to the thought, “I am a sinner, I am a sinner, I am a sinner,” is not only a sinner, but is, without knowing it, a fool. He lacks the first element of knowledge. No man acts in any other direction in such a way as this. In such cases the conscience has been acuminated, intensified, and men fall into unnatural experiences, and try to retain them ; and finding that they cannot, they complain and say, “I cannot keep my religious feelings. All my purposes and resolutions in regard to a higher life are transient.” Of course nature, which is grace in your case, is too mighty for your folly.

Then there is the law of the inspiration of distinctively *moral* feeling. This is a matter which should be more closely studied, perhaps, than almost any other head that I have mentioned. There is an impression that religious feeling is the direct product of the divine Spirit. It may be, as harvests are the product of the sun ; but the sun works differently on different growths. It works in one way on the leaves of a sweet apple-tree, and in another way on those of a sour apple-tree. It works in one way to produce rye, in another way to produce barley, and in another way to produce Indian corn. It works in one way upon clay, and in another way upon ice.

Now, the moral or spiritual part of a human being, that

part which makes him a man and not an animal—that comes from God. It is universal mind, moving in universal space, that gives us vitality, and inspires our reason and moral emotions in all their variations. I hold, as much as any one, that a true moral feeling is an inspiration of God ; but it is an inspiration which acts differently in different persons.

I recollect very well when it was thought that no person could be soundly a Christian who had not a climacteric experience, bearing relation first to *seriousness*, then to *conviction*, then to *conversion*, and then to *joy* and a *developed Christian life*. I remember very well when I used to think that no man could be truly converted, and become a good orthodox Christian, unless he derived his inspiration from a good orthodox source. He must show that it was under such and such training that he was aroused and saved. He must show that his salvation bore such and such relations to the great fundamental truths of Christianity.

Now, far be it from me to say that the great truths of the divine nature, of the government of God, of man's nature, and of human responsibility are not more nearly concerned than any others in the production of emotion, and in the change of men's lives—they are ; but I hold to the sovereignty of God. I hold that no man can say that God acts in so many ways, and only in so many ways. I hold that the divine Spirit, in acting upon the hearts of men, acts by innumerable influences, and in innumerable channels, besides those which we are accustomed to reckon as moral inspirations. For example, there is one class whose emotions distinctly run to ideas. All men's emotions follow reason. Reason is a window through which light comes into the soul. Reason is to men what light is to all manner of colors. Everybody feels, on account of some foregoing action of reason. But there are some men who have no distinct conceptions of moral emotion except those which evolve ideas—that is, differentiated truths, or a series of propositions.

Take the mind of old John Calvin—one of the most incisive, one of the strongest, one of the ablest, and one of the noblest of men in respect to mere intellection—a kind of Christian Plato, without Plato's heart. The great trouble with

John Calvin was that he had no heart. But as a profound thinker, as a clear observer, as a reasoner without chaff to his wheat, there has seldom been such a man as he. And if you present to a man like him views of God, of duty, of life, and of the life to come, which shall take hold of his moral nature, they must be not simply consecutive ideas, but ideas arranged, formulated ; and they must be presented so as to answer to the intellectual constitution of his mind. There are many who belong to this class.

There are many men that have been trained as lawyers who could not go with any profit to a Methodist meeting where there was a voluminous outpouring of the whole brotherhood, with noise and clamor and sensuous excitement ; they would be filled with repulsion and disgust by such modes of worship. And you might take them into the smallest congregation where some Doctor Skinner or some Doctor Williams was discussing a theological question, no matter with what slow reading, no matter with what want of emphasis, no matter with what inevitable dullness, and they would be interested. There would be clear, beautiful, logical ideas presented one after another, and they would sit and take them in, and smack their lips, and say, "That is the kind of preaching for me," and would go home feeling that they had been fed ; while their children would go home wishing that father and mother would go somewhere else to church.

We are accustomed to say of such men that they are *men of ideas*—that they have no emotion. They may have no distinctively strong emotion ; but they have some emotion ; and what they have follows ideas, and produces ideas ; and they are to be dealt with by means of ideas ; but they are not to rail against nor to despise your fluxes of feeling.

A man says to me, "Do you mean to say that when you walked in the gallery of the Luxembourg and in the Louvre you rose nearer to a conscious perception of God than ever before in your life ? Do you pretend to tell me that God blessed vague art, miscellaneous forms and colors, and that these things acted on your mind so as to bring you into communion with the future, with heaven, with spiritual in-

telligences, and, above all, with God ? Do you claim that such moonshine did you good, and ripened summer in your soul ?” My reply is, “I do claim just that ; and who art thou, that thou shouldst tell God that he shall not impress my moral feeling through the esthetic faculty because he impresses yours through the intellectual faculty ?”

I never was so near the gate of heaven, I never was so like a globe of fire on every side, as when I first walked in those galleries. Literally, some of the old historic representations which I saw there lifted me above the realization of this lower sphere. Notably, at Stratford-on-Avon, the home of the great poet, the rooms which he occupied, the church, the Avon itself, gently flowing—these so raised me out of my physical consciousness that I seemed to myself like an ethereal being, transparent and invisible. I actually could not feel the ground on which I walked, my whole system was so cerebrated. And when I went to Paris it was just so there. Alas ! that it should be only first experiences that have power to affect one so. Never before did I have such a sense of my sinfulness and of my unworthiness as I had when walking, hour after hour, through those chambers. Never before did I so wonder that God should love me. Never before did I have such thoughts of the Lord Jesus Christ. The impressions which I then received were revelations to me.

The beauty-loving element, then, has power to open the door of the soul, and produce profound moral emotions. You say it ought not to ; but I say it *does* ; you say it is not natural, but I say it is *true* ; you say it is not orthodox, but I say it is *divine*—and you can settle it between you!

When, therefore, a man says, “I cannot be a Christian when I go to church ; I do not feel interested in anything there ; but when I go into the fields, on the Sabbath day, and walk up and down amid the scenes of nature, I am conscious of rising to a feeling of gratitude, and I am rebuked for a great many unworthy things.” When a man says this, if it is an excuse for riding on Sunday after a fast horse, I condemn it. If you want pleasure on the Sabbath, say so, and take the responsibility of it ; but if you are an honest man,

and on due consideration you think it is better for you to spend the day surrounded by God's works, walking in the meadows, on the bank of some beautiful stream, or along the edge of some delightful forest ; if you sincerely believe that such a use of Sunday tends more to raise your thoughts heavenward and God-ward than any other, do not be ashamed to stand up against deacon and class-leader and minister and say so. So far as you are concerned it may be true. It is as right for some persons to have the chamber of the soul unlocked by the key of nature as it is for others to have it unlocked by the key of the Catechism. For God is sovereign, and he works as he pleases, and he pleases to work in many different ways.

There are others (and I think this class embraces the great majority of mankind) whose moral feelings are largely dependent upon the imagination. If I were asked to tell what two elements constitute the whole revelation of God, I should say *fact* and *fiction*. The framework of the Bible may, almost beyond peradventure, be said to be one flowing history from beginning to end ; and woven in it, and through it, and over it, and around it, is fiction. There is the historic element, and there is the imaginative element, by which it is made up. One reason why I feel that it is divine is that men, in the earlier and later stages of the world's development, have been dependent on the power of these two elements. You have a perception of things invisible, and you have also a perception of things visible. The imagination, working with the reason, constitutes faith, generically considered. There are specific kinds of faith—there is a faith that works by fear, there is a faith that works by hope, there are faiths that work in various ways; but the fundamental element of faith is reason so etherealized by the imagination that it can see things not present which exist, that it can create new things, and that it can form images of things that have no existence. It is the imagination that makes fables ; it is the imagination that makes parables ; it is the imagination that makes petty fictions for the entertainment and instruction of children ; it is the imagination that makes fairy tales, legends, myths, by which the young are inducted to knowl-

edge. Nations, in their childhood, are largely brought to intelligence and culture through the medium of the imagination. And that which is true of the beginnings of national and individual life in this respect ought to be true of their endings. Every man should have a susceptibility to moral emotion through the imaginative element.

Tell me how any man can read the Apocalypse of John and appreciate it without imagination. How shall I stand and hear the thunderings that roll in that book ; how shall I understand its songs and triumphs ; how shall I see the city, and its processions of rejoicing saints ; how shall I be filled with wonder at the marvelous scenes which are depicted ; how shall I be brought into sympathy with all that is in heaven, and all that is on earth, and all that is under the earth, and all that is in the sea ; how shall I rise up and come into communion with those angelic hosts that lift their voices in praise to God—how shall I do these things if I have not imagination ? How can you, O mathematician, stand in the presence of such representations, and see anything ? Logician, what do you see when you read them ? Mere reasoner, what do you see ? Ye that are children of the imagination see all these things. Shout is joined to shout, joy touches joy, triumph takes hold on triumph, and the best nature in man comes forth under the divine influence of imagination. We have been idolaters of reason, and if we sprang from New England we have been particularly idolators of logic. These be thy gods, O Yankee !

Now, the whole history of the development of Christianity in Oriental lands, and in all lands, shows that under the divine economy the master instrument by which manhood is created is religion. Take, for example, the old way of thinking of God. When God came to Jacob, he came as *the God of his father*. He did not say, “I am Jehovah,” he did not say, “I am the God of the whole heaven and of the whole earth,” he did not say, “I am the Lord God of omnipotence ;” he said “I am the God of thy father.” What is the difference between these several declarations ? The last one touches the domestic, the home imagination. If he had said, “I am the God that was feared by your father, and I am a proper object

for your reverence, and for that of your posterity," the effect would not have been the same. What is it to us that God was the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob? What has the imagination to do with that?

When you are seeking a revelation, say, "Lord God of my dear mother!" and see what a God will start up at the touch of the imagination quickened by the affections. Is there anything that you love very much? Is there anybody that you revere? Is there some saintly person that is dear to you? When you pray in good earnest, say, "O God of such a one," naming that person. So I might pray to the God of my Litchfield school-days.

"Why," people say, "what sort of preaching is this which teaches men to forsake the words that are in the Bible, and to make words of their own?" It is because you are in bondage to the letter that it seems strange to you. The use of the imagination will give you a liberty and a power which you have no conception of. If you would do that which the apostles did in spirit, whose example you follow by the crust and the rind, and not by the kernel and the inside, you would have a breadth of experience to which you are a stranger now. They did certain things, and you do precisely the same things, and think you are imitating them. No, you are not. You cannot more truly evade imitating them than by literally copying their outward acts. Such a following of their example may make you a parrot or a monkey, but it does not make you a rational follower. Real imitation goes to the inward thing; and when you imitate the apostles, you should do it by using your imagination to bring down, by the help of your experience, thoughts of God which shall magnify to your apprehension the sphere in which he moves.

Then there are others who, with all the imagination that they can raise, can scarcely make progress. Their imagination is small and feeble, and needs developing and strengthening.

Did you ever, before matches were invented, see a man in the early morning (for they used to get up betimes in those days) undertake to make a fire from coals poorly raked

the night previous? He pokes and pokes about in the heap of ashes, and by-and-by he discovers a spark. He seizes it with the tongs. It is no bigger than a pea. He blows it, and blows it, and blows it, and at last, by the utmost care, succeeds in bringing the speck to a flame, and in lighting a candle; and then he is safe.

Now, there are some men whose imagination is about like a fire raked up in a heap of ashes. If they would dig it out, and fan it, they might get a flame, and make a light, which would enable them to see many things which they cannot see now. What can they see? A hammer, a hatchet, a saw, an ax, a beetle, wood, stone,—tangible, visible objects. And when others tell of seeing other things, they wag their heads, and say, "*I believe in real substantial things.*" As if there was nothing real and substantial except that which belongs to matter, the lowest of all conceivable things!

There are, happily, other doors for feeling, besides the imagination. Persons who lack imagination are frequently quick in social sympathy, which goes far toward making up the deficiency. There is a kind of magnetism which glances from one person on to another. There is a subtle element here which is not half enough understood, and which is not half enough expressed, but which is often felt. I know that when I was a boy and had an ache, and the kind-hearted nurse said, "Let me find the ache," and having found it, said, "It is not so bad, Henry; I will kiss it all away," it did go away, and I did not know where it was. You say it is impossible. I say it is not. I say that pain is of the nerve, and that you can act on men with your mind so that their whole bodily condition shall be changed. You can repel pain in this way. A man can be in such a state of mind that he can burn at the stake almost without experiencing pain. We have it demonstrated, in the nursery and elsewhere, that one mind has the power of projecting itself on other minds.

For instance, let a great round, big-chested Methodist, who has the root of the matter in him, who has genuine religion, though he has a rough way of manifesting it—let him go into a crowded assembly of Methodists, and pour out tides of feeling, and let the people all around about him

begin to cry, and groan, and shout, and clap their hands ; now if a man who is unemotional be present, he will have no sympathy with this, and will perhaps be disgusted by the exhibition. Multitudes have come to God under the excitement of such occasions, although there are multitudes who, if they come to God at all, come under circumstances that are entirely different. There are many who never come to God through ecstatic feeling, but who come to him through social feeling. They go to meetings where they are influenced by others, and spiritual emotions are aroused in them, and they cry, "Oh, I see ! Praised be God, I have the blessing!"—for when one has a sight of the spiritual realm which he never had before he thinks he has "the blessing." They go forth from the meeting, and those spiritual emotions pass away ; but when they go to the meeting again their souls are overflowing with religious feelings once more ; and they say, "God is always here with his people." They have not power to awaken these feelings in themselves, so they go where others are, that the social element may unlock their souls, and bring them into a moral state. That is the philosophy of it, as I understand it.

There are different modes of reaching men's interior natures. Some are to be treated according to one method, and some according to another. It is ignorance or neglect of the laws of feeling that makes so much trouble with persons in their religious experience. There are many who think that if they are to have true moral feelings they must have them in a particular way ; whereas true moral feelings come in an infinite number of ways. Some men say to me, "I do not like your church ; it is very plain, and there is nothing venerable in it"—and I am afraid they are right. They say, "O ! when I go into a cathedral, the moment I step across the threshold I feel that everything changes"—and they are right. There are some folks who are so affected ; but they are not to say that everybody else must take that which is true to them ; they are to leave to us that which is true to us.

Therefore I say that a certain number of sects is better than any one great body, because some will go to the rousing Methodist church who would not go to the Calvinistic

church, where intellectual discussions are carried on ; and some will go where there is a magnificent ritual, and where they will be helped through the senses, through the imagination, and through the power of association, who would not go elsewhere. I do not deny to other men their preferences in these matters ; and let them not deny my preferences to me. What I call true catholicity is a recognition of all the ways in which God works upon the human soul. Some men come to a feeling of trust, of hope, of faith and of love toward God through the imagination ; others come to it through reason ; others still through the social instincts ; and we should accept all these various methods without quarreling.

Another hindrance to the development of moral feeling and to its continuous flow, in so far as continuity of moral feeling is practicable, is found in the law of discord or the force of malign feelings in changing the current and nature of a man's emotions. If, on a day when he feels like it, John Zundel is pouring out an idea on the organ, you will frequently see that there is a note introduced which evidently is not at all in the line of the thought that is being rendered, and which is a discordant note as it first strikes your mind ; but instantly there is a change ; the theme conforms itself to another scale ; and the whole harmony flows out after that note, which, as compared with those which went before, was discordant, but which is really a hint for a new variety, a new direction, a new course. And this is just as true for an erroneous note, which is wrong, and stays wrong, and is not the mere entrance to a new modulation. When a hundred notes are right, if one shrill note that is wrong be thrown in, as, for instance, from the oboë, it will put to shame the entire orchestra.

Now, in the human soul, which is the most exquisite of all orchestras, you may have mirth, you may have reason, you may have wit and humor, you may have veneration, you may have hope, you may have faith, and they help each other, and are naturally harmonious, and cannot of themselves make discord ; but when a man is in that peaceful and joyous state of mind which it is the nature of these combined elements to induce, let one single malign feeling strike in

among them, and it will put them out of concord, and strike a line of discord through them.

A man may be at church listening to a pleasing discourse, and may be rejoicing in high and noble thoughts, resting in a blessed state of mind, and, all at once, looking about, he may have the harmonious flow of his feelings disturbed by the sight of a man that owes him something. Instantly an avaricious impulse may sweep through his soul, and quench the spiritual meditation in which he has been indulging.

Have you ever been among the songsters on the edge of a forest in June, and heard the warblers singing, and the sparrows chirping, and the bluebird's exquisite little lady note? If, during a chorus of birds' voices, a hawk in the air, so high as not to throw a shadow on the ground, should but once scream, every little voice would be hushed. One note up there is enough to put to silence five hundred notes down here. So it is in the human soul. Men may have all manner of ecstacies; but let there be one hawk-note struck, and it will put all these ecstacies and joys to flight.

The man says, "He owes me; and I will take a turn on him, I will take the twist out of him—I *will* do it; it is just and right"—and his spirituality is all gone. You cannot mix benign with malign feelings. Pride, selfishness, hatred, anger, wrath, envying, jealousy, cannot be mixed with love, and kindness, and generosity, and magnanimity, and meekness, and gentleness, and humility. One class of these qualities is of the flesh, and the other is of the Spirit; and the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh. They are not reconciled, neither indeed can they be.

Then there are persons who ought to have in this discourse an explanation why, when they begin a day with high feelings, they lose them before the day is half gone; why, when on some Sabbath day they have a blessed revelation, and pray God to continue it through the week, it is not continued.

There are other elements which I intended to speak of, and of which I should have spoken had I not dwelt so long on those that I have considered. There is the law of happy-

ness, there is the law of association, and there are several other laws connected with this subject of the production and continuance of moral and spiritual feeling, to which I should have liked to call your attention ; but the time will not permit.

Christian brethren, there are two things that I wish to say in closing this discourse, by way of application. First, on the first Sabbath of the new year, when every man ought to take measures, make resolutions, form purposes, ought it not to be a part of your plan to rise to a higher state of moral emotion, and to live more in the better instincts and inspirations of your nature in the year that is to come than you have in the year that is gone by ? and if that is your purpose, is not the way in which to do it made more clear to you ? Are not the laws by which you can rise from an infantile or childhood state to the realm of spiritual things as distinct as the laws by which you regulate your physical or material forces ? Are not the laws of the soul as clearly defined as the laws of the body ? If a man would have moral feeling, and would understand how it is acquired, and how it may be perpetuated, and how it may be varied, and would be informed of those things which disturb or destroy it, may he not proceed on as distinct a basis as that on which he would proceed if he were going to educate himself in music, or mathematics, or history, or French, or any other branch of knowledge ? If a man can unite with the laws which regulate his secular life the development of the higher instincts which belong to humanity, is it not a thing to be desired both for his own sake and for the sake of those who are associated with him ? Is it not desirable that you should have an abiding sense of the reality of the invisible world, of its nearness to you, of God's existence and presence, of your duties to God and to your fellow-men, of the royalties which belong to you as a son of God, and of joy, peace, aspiration, faith and love ? Is it not becoming, at the beginning of the year, that you should purpose to yourself to rise to a higher state of communion with God, and to higher relations with men, not simply for one moment, for one day, or for one week, but for the whole year ?

Is it not to-day in every man's power to say, "I will, this year, undertake to lift my whole being into a higher sphere, to take a step upward, to develop my nature on a higher plane than I have ever done before ; and if there is a spirit of God that will help me, if there is an inspiration that will guide and incite me, then by all that is sacred in religion, and by all that is revered in the thought of God, I will, as the best offering that I can bring to God, bring him my heart, all equipped, all eager, all ready to go forward and follow on to know the Lord"?

Let us, then, on the first Sabbath of the year, with such hopes as these, draw near together round about the table on which are the symbols that represent Christ to us. Let us draw near with humble boldness, with a spirit of consecration, with unfeigned love, with desire, and with hope, feeling that we can bring nothing but prayer. Pray for what you would have, and for what you would be. Come, and partake of these dumb symbols ; and in doing so kindle in yourselves faith in the living realities which they represent. Come, all who can come in the right spirit. I ask no man to come because he is a member of this church ; I ask no man to come because he is a member of any church ; but whoever, in the secrecy and silence of his own conscience, knows that he needs divine help ; whoever can honestly draw near and say, "Lord, if thou wilt help me, I will be thine"—him I invite to come and partake of the help of his Lord, the all-merciful Jesus, who gave his life a ransom for us all. If you are losing the Divine Spirit, this is the place and this is the time for you to come and implore help. Come, not from form, not from habit, but from an inward reality ; and then this memorial is yours. It belongs to every man who has faith in Jesus Christ.

## PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON.

We rejoice, our Father, that there is no prosperity nor gladness that lifts us above the need of thee. We are thankful that there is no sorrow nor trouble that sinks us beneath thy care. Thou art ever present with us. And though we cannot always rise through the cloud of our own feelings to discern thee, with thee is no darkness nor shadow. With thee the night shineth as the day, the darkness as the light; and we are always with thee, in thy consciousness; and there is no such love upon earth as thine toward us. Though we cannot comprehend it, nor understand how One can be so great as to care for all things, and yet regard each particular creature in all the vast assemblage even as we do each one in the smaller household of our own family, still thou hast been pleased to declare the minuteness of thy thought. The very hairs of our head are numbered. Not a sparrow falls to the ground without thy notice. And the whole race, scattered abroad throughout thy boundless domain, are before thy thought. They are all within the circuit of thy love, and the purposes of thy mercy. Thou art God over all, blessed forever, and forever blessing.

We draw near to thee, O Lord, this morning, with some faint consciousness of what the greatness of thy being is, but praying for more knowledge; praying that the road to knowledge may be opened to us by the transformation of our own natures; praying that we may become like thee in order to understand what thou art. So teach us to deny the flesh and all its lusts, so teach us to bring into subordination every passion and every appetite, so teach us to develop in ourselves all sweet affections, so teach us to aspire after truth and justice, so inspire us with holy desires, that we may rise into the spiritual realm, and dwell in the invisible, and thus, through our own experience, come nearer and nearer to some true apprehension of thy nature, and thy feelings and dispositions toward us.

We beseech of thee, O Lord our God, that thou wilt grant to every one in thy presence, this morning, a sense of the forgiveness of sins. If there be any who are afraid to look up into thy face, so speak mercy to them that they may discern a forgiving God. If there be any who are conscious of their own delinquency, or of their own helplessness to overcome easily besetting sins, and to walk in the way that is before them, and which they desire to walk in, O grant that they may have borne in upon them, this morning, that divine impulse, that inspiration of the Holy Spirit, by which they shall understand that their strength is not of themselves alone, but also of God.

We pray that thou wilt grant to all those who are environed with care, who are bearing burdens, and who are tried with perplexities, that patience which they need, and that trust in divine providence which shall bring them rest and disarm them of fears. To all who sit under burdens and in darkness, and are to themselves prisoners, if not

slaves, O Lord, bring release. May they have the liberty of sons of God. Teach every one how poor is this life compared with that toward which it is working; how small is the inheritance of the best of us here compared with the riches which are laid up for us in the heavenly state; how little is friendship in this life, which is but twilight, compared with that eternal friendship which exists beyond the flood. Grant that we may have brought near to us some sense of thy benignity; of thine all-surrounding power; of thy tender thought and care of us, ministering to our want on every side, within and without; of the wonder of that voyage which we are making; and of the blessedness of that shore toward which we are tending. Grant that the world above, and around, and within, may be so disclosed to us this day that we shall feel our faith and our strength renewed. And may we realize that we are ministered to by thee. As the clouds pour down that which comes from the mountain, from every fountain and from every rill, so may we feel that we are moved by a spirit descending from above, that all our experiences are impled of God, that he watches us, thinks of us, takes care of us, and that all things shall work together for good to us if we love God. May we be filled with a sense of thy providential government and personal care, this morning, that we may be able now, and here, to rejoice in the Lord; to be glad to express our thanksgiving in sacred song, and to fill the hearts of those who are darkened with light.

Bless the affliction of those who are bereaved. Grant that those who have wandered out of the way, and are come again to the Shepherd and Bishop of their souls, may feel his great benignity and forgiving love to-day.

Grant, O Lord our God, that every one in thy presence may have some token of thy thought of him, and feel the power of God resting upon him, so that this shall not be an outward assembling alone—so that each soul present shall feel that it is divinely blessed, and so that we shall all go away as children feeling that we have received some gift.

We beseech of thee that thou wilt grant thy blessing to rest upon all those for whom we should pray. Remember those who are laboring from out of our midst in behalf of those who are less favored than themselves. May those who are torch-bearers be enlightened to see the path plainly while they are showing it to others. We pray that those who purify men, and shield them from temptation, may be strengthened against all evil. We beseech of thee that those who impart knowledge to others may have fountains of knowledge springing up in them. We pray that among men there may be that patience and gentleness and goodness and long-suffering faith in behalf of the ignorant which God hath toward them. May all who are striving to follow in the footsteps of Christ find the revelation of a Saviour in their own experience, so that they may become better teachers, not only, but better men. Remember all those who desire to take the stores and accessions which have been given to them, and use them in works of benevolence. Grant, we pray thee, that more and more there may be that self-denial, that zeal in doing good, which shall bring us into the relationship of sons of God.

Bless, we pray thee, all the churches of this city, and all thy

servants who preach the gospel therein. Clothe them with the spirit of their Master. Grant that they may have power both to make known the truth and to reap abundantly the fruit of the truth made known.

We pray for the churches in the great city near us. We pray for all those instruments by which, throughout this land, men are seeking to stop barbarism, to turn back ignorance, and to do away with the vices and crimes which afflict men. Everywhere may intelligence prevail, together with virtue, and self-government, and justice and truth.

May the light which rests upon this land be reflected hence, and seem beautiful to many and many a nation that sits in the region and shadow of death. May the light of our example rise with healing in its beams.

We pray for the human race; for their encouragement; for their education; for their power in virtue. May men become more and more powerful, each in himself, so that it shall not be possible to bind them or oppress them. May Liberty, the child of true piety, come forth everywhere. May all the earth see thy salvation.

And we will give the praise to the Father, the Son and the Spirit, evermore. *Amen.*



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